

Bangladesh and Bhutan

Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different

November 2027 | 26 Days

\$16,990 per person, twin share

Solo Supplement: \$2,990

Tour Highlights

- The Sixty Dome Mosque, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- A boat trip through the Sundarbans – the largest mangrove forest on Earth
- Explore the beautiful Kaptai Lake, home of many tribal groups
- Hike to the legendary Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) monastery, clinging to the cliff face
- Visit Bhutan's lesser travelled east where you'll hardly find another tourist



Bangladesh and Bhutan



Tour overview

Bangladesh, the Land of Bengal, is a South Asian country marked by lush greenery and many waterways. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with over 150 million inhabitants living in close harmony with their environment. About half of the country's total area is no higher than 10m above sea level, which has led to a unique river-based way of life. The Ganges and Brahmaputra are the two main rivers of Bangladesh, carrying tonnes of silt from the mighty Himalayas. In addition to these two rivers, there are hundreds more, forming a wide and complex river system. Bangladesh is home to the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, best explored as the locals do: by boat. The hilly areas of the North and South-east are lush green landscapes of terraced tea plantations, occupied by smaller tribal groups. The capital city, Dhaka, with nearly 17 million people, is a gloriously noisy and chaotic place, bubbling with energy. Predominantly Muslim, Bangla culture is warm and welcoming, and with tourism still in its infancy, there are wonderful opportunities to get to know the locals.

The Kingdom of Bhutan, known to the locals as Druk Yul, the Land of the Thunder Dragon, is a small landlocked nation in the Himalayas. Mainly due to its physical location, Bhutan was never colonised or conquered and retains its strong sense of national identity. Nearly three-quarters of the country is covered in forest. Its highest peak, Kulu Kangri, is over 7,500 metres. The country's population is very small, at just 700,000. Most are Bhote Buddhists and ethnic Nepalese. The Taksang monastery (known as Tiger's Nest) is the country's best-known icon, but there are many more highlights on offer. While Bhutan may be one of the least developed societies, it may just be one of the happiest. The Gross National Happiness philosophy, developed by the ruler King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, measures the well-being and happiness of the people, rather than material wealth measurements.

If you're the sort of traveller who enjoys connecting with friendly locals, in a place where you're unlikely to bump into many tourists, then this is the trip for you.



Activity rating: Active

This tour requires a good level of fitness. You should be able to walk for up to an hour at a steady pace, manage stairs, varied terrain and inclines, and board and disembark transport independently

Sunday 21st November DEPARTURE

Today, we depart Australia for Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. On arrival, we'll transfer to the hotel, where we'll stay for three nights. All flights are to be confirmed – likely to be a late evening arrival.

Overnight: Dhaka

Day 1, Monday 22nd November DHAKA

Welcome to the most chaotic and talkative city on earth! This morning, the group will take a tour of this fascinating city of 17 million people. First stop, Dhaka University –the oldest and largest university of Bangladesh. Then visit Curzon Hall –a town hall named after Lord Curzon, a Viceroy of India (1899-1905) who laid its foundation stone in 1904. We'll visit Dhakeshwari –a temple built by King Ballal Sen in the 12th century, a state temple of the Hindu Community. Then it's a short drive to Lalbagh for the Mughal Fort, also known as Aurangabad Fort, an incomplete but beautiful 17th-century fort. The Star Mosque, known as Tara Masjid, is beautifully decorated with Japanese and English china clay tiles using the Chinitikri application and blue star motifs on the outside. The Armenian Church, a historically significant architectural monument, was built in 1781 and bears witness to the presence of a significant Armenian community in the region during the 17th-18th centuries. Next stop, the Puran Dhaka (the old quarters) and the most beautiful Nawab's residence, Ahasan Manzil, also known as the "Pink Palace". Time permitting, we'll also visit the Liberation War Museum, which preserves the memories of the 1971 Liberation War that led to Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan. Finally, the Parliament Complex is the masterpiece of world-famous architect Louis I. Khan. Overnight: Dhaka **B/L/D**

Day 2, Tuesday 23rd November DHAKA AND RIVER CRUISE

Today, we will experience a variety of activities with a day-long Shitalakhya River Cruise. After breakfast, we will be driven to Kanchan Bridge and board the cruise boat between 09:30 and 10:00 hrs. The boat will sail towards Demra, and we'll visit Murapara Zamindar House, which is now a college. We will also visit a local village along the river to experience the rural lifestyle. Then visit a small Weaver village called Rupshi in Demra. Its claim to fame is the weaving of the finest Jamdani Saris, which gave it the prestigious tag of Intangible World Heritage. In the evening, disembark from the boat at the same point where we can shop for local crafts. Overnight: Dhaka **B/L/D**

Day 3, Wednesday 24th November DHAKA – MONGLA VIA NARAIL

Today is a long day, around 6 hours, with over 250 km of driving. Check out of the hotel early, around 07:00 hrs, before the drive over the newly built Padma River Bridge. You'll notice a drastic change once you reach Gobra Bazar –a remote village of Narail, where the group will visit the Otter-fishing community, which is still practising an ancient and unique mode of fishing with tamed and trained otters. Board a local fisherman's boat and watch the technique the otters use to catch fish by diving into the river. Then we will be driven to Mongla, stopping along the way to visit the Shiva Temple Complex in Bhatpara village. The drive continues to the Mongla River Jetty. Board the vessel booked for you to visit the Sundarban Forest. Overnight: On board **B/L/D**

Day 4, Thursday 25th November SUNDARBAN CRUISE (UNESCO WORLD NATURAL HERITAGE)

Experience the pure wilderness over the largest mangrove forest on earth. We will have the opportunity to walk through jungle trails, walk along the beach, bird-watch, and island-hop. On this cruise, we will see many birds, wild animals, Asian crocodiles and dolphins diving into the river. Reach Kotka Forest Station late morning for a jungle walk behind the forest office to see the deer and other wild animals. In the evening, our vessel will sail for Kachikhali Forest Station. Overnight: On board **B/L/D**

Day 5, Friday 26th November SUNDARBAN CRUISE (UNESCO WORLD NATURAL HERITAGE)

Another pristine day in the Sundarbans. The more the cruise sails through the dense green expanse of water, the deeper you enter a planet like no other. It's another world where you are surrounded by life, and almost none of it human! Overnight: On board **B/L/D**

Day 6, Saturday 27th November SUNDARBAN – MONGLA PORT – BARISAL (VIA BAGERHAT)

Disembark from the vessel and drive to Bagerhat, a city lost in the mangrove jungle at the confluence of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. It was founded by the Turkic commander Ulug Khan Jahan in the 15th century. Visit the 60 Domed Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Bangladesh, built in the 15th century by Khan Jahan Ali and also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Then we will drive to Barisal, and if time permits, you may stroll around the city and the local bazaar. Overnight stay in Barisal for two nights. Overnight: Barisal **B/L/D**

Day 7, Sunday 28th November BARISAL BY BACKWATER

Today involves a full-day excursion via the backwaters, canals and rivulets of Barisal. Experience life in this remote region with floating rice markets, grains, fruits, vegetables and logs. Visit a local school and some villages. Meet the locals on the river where well-to-do families buy boats, not cars! Overnight: Barisal **B/L/D**

Day 8, Monday 29th November BARISAL – SONARGAON

In the early morning, we'll visit the wholesale fish and vegetable markets. After breakfast, we'll drive to Sonargaon, about 200 km and around a 5-hour drive. Sonargaon is the ancient capital of undivided Bengal before Murshidabad and Kolkata. The "Panam City" will be our focus here, a fascinating, tiny piece of an abandoned township, a half-closed passage between yesterday and today. It is one of the most endangered historic sites in the world and a subject of significant archaeological and artistic interest. The New York-based World Monument Fund included Panam Nagar in its World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites in 2006. Spend time at the Folk Art and Craft Museum and visit the small one-domed Goadi Mosque, built in 1519 during the Bengal Sultanate period. Overnight: Sonarghan **B/L/D**



Day 9, Tuesday 30th November SONARGAON – RUPSHI – SREEMANGAL

This morning, we will drive to Sreemangal – the major tea-growing area of Bangladesh, known as the city of two leaves and one bud. The road journey through the Asian highway will be memorable with wonderful natural views of the countryside, village markets and rivers. Upon arrival in Sreemangal, our guide will take us to a small Pottery village in Mirzapur Union to see how local craftsmen still work by hand on a moving wheel. Then, we'll visit Monipuri Village to learn about the tribe's weaving craftsmanship. Enjoy a tribal cultural program with an authentic Monipuri dinner in this village. Overnight: Sreemangal **B/L/D**

Day 10, Wednesday 1st December SREEMANGAL

Today involves a day excursion in and around Sreemangal. We'll walk through Lawachara National Park and interact with the Khasia tribal people. We'll also learn about the Manipuri tribe's weaving craftsmanship. Dinner in the hotel. Overnight: Sylhet **B/L/D**

Day 11, Thursday 2nd December SYLHET

Very early in the morning, after sunrise, we'll visit a Tea Garden and experience the tea-leaf collection as we walk through the garden. You can join the workers and collect the leaves; it will be a lifelong memory. Then drive to Sylhet. We'll take an afternoon stroll around the town to see the Kean Bridge, Clock Tower landmark and the bank of the Surma River. Overnight: Sylhet **B/L/D**

Day 12, Friday 3rd December SYLHET TO SHILLONG, INDIA

Departure this morning for the Indian Border, continuing to Shillong (50 km to the border, approx. 1.5 hrs, then 90 kms to Shillong, approx. 2.5 hrs). We'll stop at the picturesque border town of Tamabil for a tea break before saying farewell to Bangladesh.

WELCOME TO INDIA We'll be received at the Dwaki Border on the Indian side before arriving in Shillong, the capital of the state of Meghalaya in India. Shillong (meaning 'the abode of the clouds'), is located in undulating pine-covered hills. The city centre is 1,500m above sea level and currently has a population of around 270,000. It is also known as the Scotland of the East, home to several waterfalls. The state is famous for heavy rainfall, numerous caves, beautiful landscapes and amazing people and culture. Check in to our Shillong hotel. Dinner at the hotel. Overnight: Samdrup Jongkhar. **B/L/D**

Day 13, Saturday 4th December SHILLONG – SAMDRUP JONGKHAR

After breakfast, we'll depart Shillong and drive to the East Bhutan Border town of Samdrup Jongkhar, where we'll be met by our Bhutanese guide (190 km, approx. 4.5 hours).

WELCOME TO BHUTAN We'll drive the short distance to the hotel, where there will be time to relax. Overnight: Samdrup Jongkhar. **B/L/D**

Day 14, Sunday 5th December TASHIGANG

Today, we drive about 6 hours from the warmer climate of the south up to Tashigang in the foothills of the Himalayas. On the way, visit Palri Buddha Park at Mukazor. Perched on a hill about a 30-minute walk from Samten Choeling Nunnery, the park was built in 2015 to commemorate the 60th birth anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth King. We will take a brief stop at Kanglung, now the seat of Bhutan's first university. Kanglung was made famous by Jamie Zeppa's gripping account of her time living and teaching here as a young Canadian volunteer in her book Beyond the Sky and the Earth. Tashigang is in the heart of eastern Bhutan. It used to be the main market for all six districts in eastern Bhutan; people from Merak and Sakteng, a remote Eastern region, stroll through the town with their unique yak-hair hats and distinctive costumes. In the late afternoon, wander around Tashigang town, and, time permitting, we'll visit Tashigang Dzong, built in 1667. Overnight: Tashigang **B/L/D**

Day 15, Monday 6th December TASHI YANGTSE

This morning we'll drive about 2 hours to Tashi Yangtse. The small town of Tashi Yangtse is centred on the large Chorten Kora, modelled after the Bodnath Stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal. The town is also famous for its wooden cups and bowls made using water-driven and treadle lathes, and is a centre for paper manufacture. Few tourists make it this far! On the way, visit the sacred temple of Gom Kora. Guru Rinpoche meditated here and left his body print on the rock. The temple itself contains murals, said to date from the 15th Century, and a variety of sacred relics. From the Gom Kora temple, you can take a short 30-minute, uphill hike to Kapali Draphu, a sacred site known for its profound spiritual energy, blessed spring water, and connection to Guru Rinpoche. The trail offers beautiful views over the surrounding valleys. Then continue to Tashi Yangtse. Late afternoon, walk around the small town and visit Chorten Kora, where we will see a few older people praying and circumambulating the Kora. Overnight: Tashi Yangtse. **B/L/D**

Day 16, Tuesday 7th December TASHI YANGTSE TO MONGAR

Today we start our journey to Mongar at 7 am (about 4 hours). The highlight is the Mongar Festival held at Mongar Dzong. We will see locals dressed in their finest, having walked miles to attend the festivities. They come to watch masked dances, to pray, and to feast. While the festival's underlying purpose is spiritual, dances are more often like plays, telling stories in which good triumphs over evil or depicting significant historical events, especially those surrounding the life of Bhutan's patron saint, Padmasambhava (also known as Guru Rinpoche). Overnight: Mongar **B/L/D**

Day 17, Wednesday 8th December MONGAR TO BUMTHANG

Today is a long but rewarding 6-hour drive. On the way, we will stop at Ura village, a quite large village situated at 3100m and dominated by its temple. Ura is in the highest of Bumthang's valleys and is believed to be the home of Bhutan's earliest inhabitants. The village has about 40 houses closely set along cobbled streets, giving it a medieval atmosphere. Overnight: Bumthang **B/L/D**

Day 18, Thursday 9th December BUMTHANG

Today we take a day excursion to Tang valley, the most remote of Bumthang's valleys, at 2,700 metres. First, we drive about 30 minutes to Membar Tsho (the "burning lake"), which is one of Bhutan's most important pilgrimage sites. After visiting Membar Tsho, continue our drive (about an hour) to Tang Ogyen Choling, where you can visit the palace, now a museum, offering an interesting insight into life in an aristocratic family in the last century. We will arrange a packed picnic lunch at Ogyen Choling and then drive back to Bumthang. On the way, visit Ta Rimochen Lhakhang. Founded in the 14th Century, this Nyingma monastery is named for the tiger stripes visible on the rock behind the temple. In the late afternoon, there may be time to visit Jamba Lhakhang and walk along the farm road from there to Kurjey Lhakhang. Overnight: Bumthang **B/L/D**



Day 19, Friday 10th December [BUMTHANG TO GANGTEY](#)

Today, we'll drive approx. 2.5 hours to Trongsa, the gateway to central Bhutan at 2,180 m. Set amidst spectacular scenery, Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family, commands the eye from miles away. We'll visit Ta Dzong, the museum in the watchtower dedicated to the Wangchuk Dynasty, which tells the stories of the Dzong and features personal belongings of the Kings and Queens of Bhutan. Then continue for a further 2 hours to Gangtey at 2,900 m. Enjoy the views of the immense, remote Phobjikha Valley and the black mountain ranges. Visit Gangtey Gompa (one of Bhutan's oldest monasteries) and explore the valley where the villagers continue to live a traditional Bhutanese rural lifestyle. Later, drive to Khewa Lhakhang, where you can visit the temple. From the temple, we drive to Kingathang, and from there, you can walk about 40 minutes to reach Yusa. This is the site where black-necked cranes visit in their hundreds each November after spending the summer in Tibet. Overnight: Gangtey **B/L/D**

Day 20, Saturday 11th December [GANGTEY TO PANAKHA](#)

In the morning, drive about 2.5 hours to the old capital, Punakha. We will notice changes in climate and vegetation as we approach the low-lying Punakha at 1250 metres. We will stop to visit Chimi Lhakhang (Temple of Fertility), built in the 15th century by the 'Divine Madman' (Lama Drukpa Kuenley) and set amongst terraced fields in the village of Sopsokha. We can also visit Kaja Throm. This is the market where farmers display their vegetables. Afterwards, we'll see the imposing Punakha Dzong, "Palace of Great Happiness". Built in 1637, it is strategically placed at the confluence of two rivers, the Po Chu and the Mo Chu. Finally, those up for a little adventure can take a gentle raft for about an hour along the Mo Chu River, reaching just below Punakha Dzong. Overnight: Punakha **B/L/D**

Day 21, Sunday 12th December [PUNAKHA](#)

The group will drive about 30 minutes to Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Nunnery this morning. The Nunnery has one of the biggest bronze statues of Avalokiteshvara – a bodhisattva embodying infinite compassion – created entirely by local Bhutanese artisans. The temple complex also houses a permanent higher-learning and meditation centre for nuns, offering both religious training and life-skills training. From here, continue for 30 minutes up to Talo Monastery. The monastery is one of the most sacred in Bhutan. On the way back, we will also visit the Nalanda Buddhist Institute, with about 180 monks. Some of the young monks from the monastery attend a modern school to learn English, science, and other subjects. In the evening and early morning, they are taught traditional Buddhist study. Nearby is the Nobgang Monastery, dating back to the 17th century, built as the residence of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, a Tibetan Buddhist lama. Our 4th King of Bhutan was married to 4 sisters, who hailed from the area just above Nobgang monastery. Apart from the nunnery and the monasteries, we will see several local villages today. Overnight: Punakha **B/L/D**

Day 22, Monday 13th December [THIMPHU & DRUK WANGYEL FESTIVAL](#)

Early this morning, we will drive about 2.5 hours to the capital, Thimphu, via the Dochu La Pass, where we will stop to enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the Eastern Himalayan ranges. We will also stop to visit the Druk Wangyel Festival, a one-day cultural and patriotic Tshechu (festival) celebrated amid snowy peaks and the 108 memorial chortens (stupas) at Dochu La Pass. The festival was instituted in 2011 by Her Majesty the Queen Mother to honour the leadership and bravery of His Majesty the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and the Royal Bhutan Army following a 2003 military operation that removed armed insurgents from Bhutanese territory. After spending a few hours at the festival, we will continue the drive to Thimphu. Once there, we will visit the huge statue of Buddha Dordenma, which commands a tremendous view of the Thimphu valley. The huge 3-storey throne holds several chapels, and the body itself is filled with 125,000 smaller Buddha statues. Next, we will visit the Takin Reserve, which showcases the unique national animal, the Takin. Then you could walk through the Craft Bazaar, which has an array of stalls run by local handicraft shops selling purely home-made articles with no imports. We can also walk down to visit the farmers' market, where farmers display their vegetables and other products. Overnight: Thimphu **B/L/D**

Day 23, Tuesday 14th December [PARO](#)

In the morning, we will drive about 1.5 hours to Paro, situated in a beautiful valley at 2280 metres. Once in Paro, we will visit the National Museum in the Ta Dzong (watchtower), built atop the hill above Rinpung Dzong to defend the Dzong and the Paro valley during times of war. The Ta Dzong houses a magnificent collection of Bhutanese artefacts – costumes, religious paintings, arms, textiles and a fascinating collection of Bhutan stamps. From here, it is a short drive to see the Tashi Gongphel Handmade Paper factory, which produces traditional Bhutanese paper from the daphne bush. You can watch the process of cooking and soaking the daphne bark before forming it into sheets of beautiful paper for pressing and drying. Here, you can also try your hand at making traditional Bhutanese paper. After lunch, we will visit the impressive Paro Rinpung Dzong, one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture. Then we can visit the 7th-century Kyichu Lhakhang, a temple of historical significance and one of Bhutan's most sacred shrines. This evening, we will visit the Namgay Artisanal Brewery for drinks and dinner. Relax and unwind overlooking the valley. Overnight: Paro **B/L/D**

Day 24, Wednesday 15th December [TAKTSHANG MONASTERY](#)

Early in the morning, take a walk to the 'Tiger's Nest,' the sacred Taktshang Monastery, which clings to the rock face 900 m above the valley floor. First, we drive for about 35 minutes to the car park, where your hike begins. From the car park to the cafeteria, the walk takes about 1.5 to 2 hours. The cafeteria offers a spectacular view of the monastery, and you can enjoy a cup of tea. From here, you can continue up to the monastery, which will take another 1.5 to 2 hours. Tiger's Nest is one of the most sacred places for Bhutanese people and is a highlight for many visitors. Guru Rinpoche is said to have flown to the site on a tigress and subsequently meditated there for three months. It is one of Bhutan's most holy sites, attracting pilgrims not only from Bhutan but also from neighbouring Buddhist countries. After visiting the monastery, descend to the car park (which will take about 2 to 3 hours) and then we will drive to town for a late lunch. If your walk takes longer, you can have lunch at the cafeteria on your way down. Hike distance: (6.5 km, 5 to 6 hours). Starting elevation – 2,610 m, Highest elevation – 3,145 m. **Alternative option:** *The walk could be considered medium to hard, depending on your fitness level. For those not wanting to take the challenge, you visit Dzongdrakha Lhakhang. Dzongdra kha, also known as Dzongdra nye, is a sacred place of Guru Rinpoche dating back to the 8th century. In the 14th century, the treasure-hunter Gonpo Dorji discovered a crystal stupa and a relic of the Buddha on this site. You can also visit Dumtse Lhakhang, a temple built by Thangtong Gyalpo, the iron bridge builder. Then visit the Phurba Mandala Display Centre to view their art show gallery and the artists making sand mandalas. Here you can also try making sand mandalas and painting thangkas (supplement applies).* **B/L/D**

Day 26, Thursday 16th December [TO DELHI](#)

Our guide will accompany us to the airport early in the morning and wish us Tashi Delek (goodbye and good luck). Arrive and overnight at the airport hotel. Overnight: Delhi **B**

Day 26, Friday 17th December [IN TRANSIT](#)

Depart Delhi for your flight home to Australia—all flights to be confirmed.





Accommodation

Our hotels are carefully chosen to capture the local atmosphere and set you up in an ideal location. You can expect accommodation that comprises a mix of standard hotels, boutique-style hotels, and smaller, independently owned establishments. Below are some of the hotels on this tour. Final hotels may change, and a complete list will be shared with you.

Golden Tulip, Dhaka
www.goldentulip.com/bangladesh

Grand Park Hotel, Barisal
www.hotelgrandparkbarisal.com

Royal Resort, Sonargaon
www.sonargaonroyalresort.com



Why Blue Dot?

Travel is more than just moving from one place to another; it is an opportunity to explore this vast planet, connect with its people and marvel at its beauty. We have established a group of loyal, like-minded travellers who share this feeling and have taken multiple tours with us. With Blue Dot, you'll experience

- Thoughtfully designed itineraries with unique experiences
- Small, inclusive groups with a maximum of 16 travellers
- The support of both an Australian tour leader* and experienced local guides
- Programs designed to meet the needs of mature-age travellers
- Hands on, personalised service including customised flight bookings
- Tipping included in your tour cost

*Australian leaders accompany groups with more than 10 travellers.

Blue Dot welcomes solo travellers

In fact, over half of our clients are solo travellers. We understand it can be daunting to travel on your own, and we'll ensure your travel is safe, inclusive and enjoyable. You can confidently join our groups, knowing that we bring solo travellers together to share the camaraderie of an unforgettable adventure.

Enquiries and bookings

A \$500 deposit is required to secure your booking.

For more information:

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